American Civics Unit One Study Guide

The Age of the Lawgivers

**The Fertile Crescent**

* An area of fertile land in Western Asia and North Africa
* *Mesopotamia*: “The Land Between the Rivers” - Tigris River and Euphrates River
  + Basic government run by ***CITY-STATES***: cities that have political and economic control over surrounding area
  + Mesopotamia is a ***THEOCRACY***: a government ruled by divine authority or God
  + Mesopotamians were ***POLYTHEISTIC***: they believed in many gods
  + Scribes developed one of the earliest systems of writing called cuneiform: a system of wedge-shaped markings

**Hammurabi and the Code**

* Hammurabi’s Code is one of the oldest surviving codes of law ever written
  + Composed a law code of 282 laws to govern society
  + The code practiced varying levels of punishment based on the crime
  + Origins of “eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth”
  + More severe crimes are punished more harshly
  + Public officials held accountable for upholding the law
  + Dictated laws for how families should function

**The Rise of Ancient Egypt**

* The Nile regularly flooded between June and September, depositing rich mud along the shores
  + Allowed farming and irrigation to develop in the middle of the eastern Sahara
* A ***DYNASTY***is a family of rulers whose right to rule is passed on within the family
* Narmer unifies Upper and Lower Egypt in 3150 BC as the first pharaoh
* ***PHARAOH*** was the title of the king (or queen!) of Egypt
  + They ruled as an absolute monarch, as a living god, and son of Horus

**The Old Kingdom, 2700-2200 BC**

* A time of peace and prosperity, and great building projects
* The Third and Fourth Dynasties are the Golden Age
  + Mummification comes into use
  + Height of building…PYRAMIDS!!!

**The New Kingdom**

* The New Kingdom begins with the Eighteenth Dynasty
* Some of the most famous pharaohs in Egyptian history ruled in the New Kingdom
* Egypt becomes the world’s first superpower
* Hatshepsut, 1479-1458 BC: First female ruler in world history
* Thutmose III, 1479-1425 BC: Expands empire into Nubia and Syria

**Akhenaten**

* Essentially “fires” the gods of Egypt in favor of the Aten- god of the sun disk
* Attempts to institute ***MONOTHEISM*** – belief in one god
* Moves the capital from Memphis and Thebes to a brand new city called Amarna
* His people rebel and his name is virtually wiped out from history
* He is the first monotheist…but we know him because of his son…King Tut

**Ramesses the Great**

* Longest reigning pharaoh in history: 67 years
  + Married 7 wives…and plenty more on the side, estimated to have had 100 children
  + Monstrous ego and megalomaniac: built cities and monuments ALL OVER dedicated to himself
* Ramesses goes to war with the Hittite Empire for control of Syria, to expand the Egyptian Empire
* The Battle of Kadesh, 1274
  + As a result of the battle, Egypt and the Hittite Empire sign the first international peace treaty and alliance in world history

**The Kingdom of Israel**

* The Hebrews were a semi-nomadic tribe of people that originated in Mesopotamia
  + The Hebrews are the first truly monotheistic nation in world history
* Scholars believe Moses lived sometime between 1300-1200 (13th Century BC)
* The Ten Commandments are the basis for civilized law codes in much of the western world, including the United States
* Joshua establishes a military tribal-state in Canaan
* David (reign 1010-970) expands Israel into an empire from Egypt to the Euphrates
* Solomon (reign 970-930) is Israel’s third major king, and builds the first temple of Jerusalem
* After Solomon’s death Israel divides into two
  + Israel is the northern kingdom, Judah is the southern

**The Persian Empire**

* Babylon destroys kingdom of Judah in 587
  + Jewish people sent into exile; beginning of the Jewish ***DIASPORA*** – the dispersion of Jewish people through the world
* Cyrus II practices religious tolerance of conquered people
  + Allows local people to govern their own affairs
* Darius I rules from 521-486 BC
  + Divides his empire into 20 Satrapies – provinces ruled by a governor
    - The Satrapies united by the Royal Road
  + 500 BC: A rebellion against Darius in Ionia is supported by the Greek city-state of Athens
  + 492 BC: Darius launches an invasion of Greece

**Key Concepts**

* We have talked about numerous rulers in Egyptian history aside from Ramesses the Great. We have studied Djoser, Sneferu, Khufu, Hatshepsut, Seti I, Thutmose III, and Tutankhamen. Which two or three rulers of Egypt do you believe every student should learn about? Explain your thinking.
* Summarize the significance and accomplishments of Ramesses the Great. Does Ramesses deserve the title “The Great?”
* Compare and contrast the Old Kingdom vs. the New Kingdom. Which period had the greatest influence on both Egyptian and world history?
* What is the importance of Akhenaten to both Egyptian and world history? Was Akhenaten right? Do you agree or disagree with his changes to Egypt?
* Explain the main beliefs and principles of Hammurabi’s Code. Do you believe Hammurabi’s Code is a fair system of laws? Could a system like that work today?